

## 1922

**The local authority** is now the Avondale Borough Council (from 29 April 1922 to 31 August 1927)

Mayors	J W Kinniburgh	1922-23
	W J Tait	1923-27
	H Tiarks	1927
	E Copsey	1927

**Council Works Depot:** After James Binsted's death in 1920, the executor of his estate, Mr H Bollard, offered the section fronting Blake St beside the butcher's shop, and extending to the rear of the Town Hall, complete with stables, for £450 in 1922. In February, the Board felt the price was too high, and asked for a reconsideration. The Board couldn't get a lower price, and so the matter was left.

In November, the new Borough Council obtained option to buy the land, and by May 1923 the land had been bought, for £462, 10 /-. It became the Borough Council Depot for storing their road-making machinery, and became the City Council depot after 1927. By the 1970s, it was in light-industrial use.

Mr Bob Browne recalled that in the 1930s-1940s there was a big shed near the depot housing the council's wood-fired steamroller, which always had to have coal put in before it could go out onto the roads. [conversation, 9 May 2001]

**Main sewer:** One of the main concerns in the 1920s was drainage. In February the Roads Board was told that the cost of a main sewer would be £9 per head of population, or £30 per ratepayer. This would be prohibitive, the Board decided, and asked the

Minister of Health for permission to have a "modified sewer". [21/2/22 minutes]

The **Avondale Progressive League**, in 1922 were not impressed, and, *"considered the action of the Council in submitting the drainage loan proposals a second time, after the plans have been approved by the Health Dept., and the drainage Paid, on the plea of economy, is inconsistent when we consider the action of the Council in closing a road and selling it to the Jockey Club (part of Wicklow Avenue) without consulting the people for the sum of £300 requires more explanation than has been already given to the ratepayers."* [Borough Council minutes, 4/10/22]

**Avondale Manual Training School** (Standards 5 & 6, or Forms 1 & 2) was opened on the Primary School grounds fronting Great North Road on **27 April**. A tender from Mt T Wilson for erecting the school of £3585 was accepted by the Supervisor Mr Kalaugher in early 1921. [Avondale Roads Board minutes, 1921, 1922]

In so many remembrances and oral histories from past and present residents of Avondale, the name of Mr Burgess comes up time and again. He was the woodwork teacher at the Manual Training School (which also had cooking classes). Mr Bob Browne recalls Mr Burgess clearly saying, almost as a catchphrase: "Put the tools down, you sarny yob!"

When the **Avondale Intermediate** opened in 1945, Avondale Primary lost the training school, and "decapitated", becoming a Contributing School, which it is

today. [Ron Oates, *Avondale Primary School, 1870-1990*, 1990]

The front building of the Training School (there were two, one behind the other, on the left-hand side of the Great North Road frontage) became the **Assembly Hall** in 1963, after being strengthened to satisfy concerns over building safety. Unfortunately, it was declared an earthquake risk in 1979 by the Education Board, and demolished in 1981.

A sign in 1969 that read "Assembly Hall" [sic] was corrected by the then Headmaster. [Ron Oates, *Avondale Primary School, 1870-1990*, 1990]

I have my own memories of that old Assembly Hall. When I went to Avondale Primary from 1968 to 1974, the old Hall was used as a place for school performances (a stage, with changing rooms below, was at the western end), and to show films. I still remember the clatter of the old-style film reels going through the projector, and especially the fun when they ran the films backwards to rewind them!

Beside, as a separate side room, was the lunch kitchen, where parents (including my mother) volunteered on roster to come in, make up sandwiches, and fill out the lunch orders which would come in every morning from the classes on little forms of white paper – whether you wanted marmite sandwiches, or a meat pie (my favourite, though, were apple pies).

**The Amos Grocery Store:** 16/3/22 – Pages Building now owned by Arthur William Frederick Amos, who runs "The Spot" Cash Grocery

Store (with son) for the next 45 years. In 1937, part of the land at the back of the shop taken for Public Works – the telephone exchange later completed in 1958.

His wife had worked for Page as a secretary at Page's Kingsland building. Amos' son Vic Amos later recalled that they stocked virtually everything. 1 lb of tea for 1/9, 70 lb sugar for 7/6, 5 lbs of rice or dates for 1/-. Biscuits were always loose, customers coming in to ask for "2 or 3 of this, 2 or 3 of that." Spices were shovelled into a cone of paper and weighed. Cheese came in 180lb crates, covered in cloth that had to be soaked overnight. Bacon came with the bone still in. Dates came in 80lb blocks. Bran was sold by 150lb weight. The Amos' stocked hay, chaff, straw, and "all manures".

The shop had at least 6 assistants. Vic Amos recalled his wages as being £3 4/- per week.

Orders were collected by someone going on horseback around to the customers. Deliveries were by horse and cart. The carts from time to time would become stuck in the roads, and had to be helped out by another cart sent for from the shop.

The paddocks were behind the shop, with large stables for 5 horses, all tended by Bertie Humphries (who later went on to be credit manager for Farmers Trading Co.) One horse who had only one eye (and so was called "One-Eye") was unruly and poorly broken in. If something approached him from his blind side, he would shy – and as he was usually tied to the customer's gate, that would be yanked off the hinges and come

clattering after “One-Eye” as he bolted back to the shop.

Attached to the shop was a 3-roomed house occupied by the Forsyth family for a time, and then by a tenant of the shop Mrs Parnell. [Vic Amos recollection, Avondale Oral History Project, tape 15, 1991]

**Shaw’s shops:** During the 1920s, a Charles T Shaw had dining rooms (later, a confectioners/dairy) and fish-shop at 1875-1877 Great North Road, close to the site of the National Bank Building (now Ray Whites). Possibly because of the natural spring on the property that fed a small creek running down Rosebank Road, drainage problems occurred in the early 1920s on the site, which Mr Shaw apparently refused to rectify. The Roads Board put a closing order on the business. In February Shaw sent notice of intention to appeal to the Magistrates Court, but by July agreed to rectify the drainage problem. He continued in business there until the business was taken over by the Smiths in the 1930s. [Avondale Roads Board & Borough Council minutes, 1922]

**Town Hall hire rates:** On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1922 the new Borough Council increased the hire rates for users of the Town Hall.

H Empson – Pictures	20/- per night
Defence Dept.	10/-
Concerts to 10 pm	22/6
Concerts for local benefits	15/-
Socials and Dances to 12 midnight	22/6
Socials and Dances after 12	30/-
Use of supper rooms, urns & crockery	10/-

Oddfellows Lodge	10/-
Meeting of Parliamentary Electors	25/-
Public meetings of local residents	10/-
Use of Hall for Parliamentary Polling	
Booth	50/-
Saturday afternoons	5/-
Ante-room for small meetings	2/6
Bank of New Zealand office rent	1/- a week

**Public Library:** The Borough Council made attempted to set up another public library in Avondale, as there had been in the previous century, but one of the biggest of the issues was space for installing such a library. There was an idea to ask the Postmaster for use of one of the spare rooms in the old Avondale Hotel building, but this was turned down. The new manual telephone exchange was in the pipeline (achieved 1925) and all available spare rooms would be needed, so the council was advised. [Borough Council minutes, July 1922]

**Electricity:** In August 1922, the new Avondale Borough Council altered the boundaries for the district so as to be included in the Auckland Electric Power district. [Avondale Borough Council minutes, 1922]

**Avondale Plunket Office:** In September the local Plunket Society Nurse, Mrs W MacKenzie, asked if the Society could have use of the Town Hall’s ante-room office vacated by the BNZ as a Plunket Office. This was granted, and became the first Plunket Office in the Shopping Centre (followed in the 1930s by one in a house at

1901 Great North Road, the Racecourse Parade corner, and then the purpose-built Plunket rooms by the public toilet block in the 1940s.) This lasted until 1990, and the building of the Avondale Community Centre in Rosebank Road.

**Binsted butchers:** In 1922 the Binsted abattoir yards in New Lynn were closed down when the New Lynn Borough Council took over the land to develop it into Rewa Park. Soon after the yards were moved to Westfield and the Binsted estate sold the butcher's shop in Avondale to Hellaby's. [*Western Leader*, 2/5/67]

**Unity Building, Excelsior Chambers:** (54 and 56 Rosebank Road) Mr George Hosking (of Hosking & Russell, land agents) subdivided the land at the corner of Great North Rd and Browne Street. This ultimately led to erection of Excelsior Chambers. [Borough Council minutes, 20/9/22] A corner of his section was dedicated as a road with his consent in June 1924, to round the acute angle in the road. In October, Council lawyers advised that the brick shops being built by Thomas Copsey for Hosking should proceed, despite no party wall, and that a definition for party walls be included in the By-laws. In November, Copsey further advised that Hosking intended putting a second story on the building. [Borough Council minutes]

In the 1930s, Hosking's business was taken over by W J Tait, who in 1932 erected the Unity Buildings below Hosking's Building.

**Cattle drives:** In November 1922, Councillor Haslam drew the Borough Council's attention to the

fact that cattle were often driven through the Borough along the main thoroughfare, in contravention of By Law No. 4. This was a carry-over from the cattle-drive days started in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*"Our family lived at No. 9 Great North Road, New Lynn, just over the bridge from Avondale. I remember, as a child, seeing herds of cattle being driven down Avondale hill, across the Whau Bridge and down Portage Rd, which was a stock route. The drovers were on horseback with long stock whips. Fascinating to watch when one is a child. We had a good view from our front gate."*  
[memories of Doreen Shaw, letter to author, 31/3/01]

**Te Atatu Bridge proposal:** Also in November, Mr J W Paton first approached the Borough Council regarding his idea for a shorter route to Te Atatu via the Rosebank Peninsula and a bridge across the Whau Creek. His Te Atatu Community group grew to be the Te Atatu Bridge League by 1924.

While Mayor Kinniburgh expressed his opinion "that carrying out of the scheme would be of great benefit to both Te Atatu and Avondale", and that at the time the Borough Council supported the scheme, as the years passed the support became fainter and grew coloured by concerns over cost and the lapsing economy of the time. By 1926, although West Auckland authorities approved of the idea, it was largely dead. The Great North Road had been concreted – the shorter route forgotten until the North-Western Motorway development in the 1950s.

In 1922, the **Avondale Primary School** headmaster reported to his Committee that “an attempt had been made to burn the school down.”

In 1923, the Education Board “notified schools that the numerous fires and attempts at incendiarism in connection with School Buildings was a matter of grave concern to the Government. The police Department reported that school premises were frequently used at nights by vagrants and loiterers, and School Committees did not always take reasonable steps to prevent such practices.” [Ron Oates, *Avondale Primary School, 1870-1990*, 1990.]

## 1923

**New Town Hall:** Borough Council begin plans for new Town Hall. The older one was duly jacked up and moved to site next to where new Hall built.

*“Before the old Avondale hall was moved there was a shop between it and Binsted’s butchery. For a time it was used by a tailor. In the early 1920s a Mr George used the premises. He advertised his services as a family photographer, a picture framer and a maker of guitars.”* [Challenge of the Whau, p. 75]

**Tram extensions:** Trying for an extension of the tram lines to Avondale, the Borough Council were advised by Auckland City’s Town Clerk : “as the programme of tram extensions had been fully arranged for some years ahead it was impracticable for the Council to consider proposals regarding

extensions to Avondale.” [minutes, Borough Council, 17/10/23]

**Main Sewer:** On 10 November, the Borough Council held the “turning of the sod ceremony” for the start of work on Avondale’s main sewer. Over the coming years, properties were required to connect to the system.

**Second Billiard Saloon:** (1856–1860 Great North Road) In 1923, the hall was built as a billiard saloon. [Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City Council, 2001]

Phillip Woods actually started his business in an old farm shed originally on the property owned by the Collins family. Buying the shed and the land from the Collins’, Woods then had the shed demolished, and the billiard hall and barbers/tobacconists erected.

*“An appreciation from Mr Phillip James Woods for a Billiard Saloon Licence was received. The inspector of Police attached a report that the applicant was a person of good fame and reputation and fit and proper to be licensed as a saloon proprietor. Licence granted.”* [Avondale Borough Council minutes, 14/3/23]

Woods was proprietor of the Billiard Hall, except from around 1928 to 1931, when Alf Cole was listed in the directories, until World War II, After this, it was run by Edward Grey (until early 1950s). Then Alfred Billingham, through until the mid 1960s, when it became known simply as the Avondale Billiard Saloon.

[Wises Directories, 1923 to 1970]

The by-laws concerning billiard halls during the time of the

Avondale Borough Council were fairly basic. The proprietor of such an establishment needed to apply to the Town Clerk in writing for a licence, under clause 2 of the eleventh schedule of the Municipal Corporations Act 1920. Having done that, and being approved, he paid 40 shillings per annum for the license.

Operating hours were between 6 am to 11 pm, and no one under the age of 18 was allowed to enter or remain in the billiards room unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. [Avondale Borough Council By-Laws, 1925]

One Avondale resident told me that he recalled the billiard hall had 6 or 8 tables, and was set way back off the roadway down a narrow corridor. Gambling in general took place there. One type of billiards remembered is “Russian Pool”, played with a “toadstool” that lost you the game if knocked over. (Classic Russian Pool, a variant of American and English versions, involved its own specially designed table with smaller pockets and larger balls.)

## 1924

**Charles Collier** opened his ironmongery store on the east side of Great North Road, near the Rosebank Road intersection, where there had once been paddocks and blacksmith’s sheds. Later, he moved into the newly-built Excelsior Chambers (1926/27).

**Railway:** “In 1924 ... (due to dangers of St Judes railway crossing) ... signs were erected

advising motorists that it was safer to use the route via upper Rosebank Road.” [Challenge of the Whau, p. 74]

Auckland Chamber of Commerce asked Avondale for contributions toward advertising Auckland at the **British Empire Exhibition**, but the Borough Council stated they had no funds to contribute. [20/2/24]

**Telephone cables:** The District Telegraph engineer advised that Great North Rd and St Georges Rd were to be opened up to lay underground telephone cables [minutes, 2/4/24]. The Borough Council asked simply that this be completed prior to the concreting of Great North Road, and it was.

**Concrete Highway:** At a meeting in Avondale (Public Hall) on **9 May 1924**, representatives of various boroughs and town boards in Western Auckland discussed laying a concrete road along Great North Road. [Anthony G. Flude, *Henderson’s Mill*, 1977, p. 83]

It was a close-run thing. In May 1924, the Chairman of the Main Highway Board declared that the main highway (therefore the one to be sealed) was via New North Road, Station Rd and Brown St. This suited the Mt Albert Borough Council, but Avondale sent a deputation down to Wellington in June along with our West Auckland neighbours to protest, “as (Great North Road) is the route most travelled in this district and is used by 90% of the city traffic when the road is in good order.” [minutes, 21/5/24]

*The internal combustion engine had been threatening for a long time but local owners of motor cars*

*seldom strayed far from home because of the continuing atrocious condition of the roads that made any lengthy journeys a major expedition. In May 1924 the North Suburban Railway and Highways League, a local transport pressure group, together with representatives of the various Boroughs and Town Boards determined to have the main road to Auckland made of a permanent surface. Engineer's reports and costings were prepared and the League waited on the Mayor of Auckland who convened a meeting of the City Council, Local Bodies, and the Main Highways Board. The whole scheme for "the concrete road" was approved on **February 28, 1925**. [Tracks and Trains Through Henderson, by David Lowe, p. 30]*

**Electricity:** Auckland Electric Power Board (AEPB) states that when their mains reach Avondale it is proposed to supply within a radius of ½ mile from the Post Office. [Avondale Borough Council minutes, 6/8/24]

**October 1924** -- George Thomas Chandler was appointed the borough's first (and only) **Traffic Inspector** (wages £1 per week), as well as the Ranger and Pound Keeper (£1) and Noxious Weeds Inspector (also £1.). As Traffic Inspector, Chandler was in charge of policing the speed limit (15 mph in the Shopping Centre), parking (no parking allowed on Great North Road after the concreting in 1925), no smoking on buses in the Avondale Borough, and by-laws related to vehicle lights.

As the Ranger, he frequently had differences with Constable Douglas of the Avondale Police Station

regarding Douglas' cow being impounded. These led to "foul words" and a civil action, ending by the Borough Council demanding the removal of Constable Douglas by the Commissioner of Police.

The Borough Council gave Chandler a stop watch, an electric torch, and by 1926 he had his own office and a motorcycle. He also asked for a commission on fines, but the Borough Council instead gave him a wage rise, all up £5 per week for all his duties. Mr Stokes his assistant had a wage increase from 8/- to 16/- per week. (Stokes later became the ranger and pound keeper).

**31 October 1924** – official opening of the new **Avondale Town Hall**.

*"The new building which has just been completed is a handsome and capacious hall. It is of solid concrete construction, reinforced and has a dancing floor space of 68ft by 50ft and a stage 50ft by 26 ft. A handsome gallery is approached by a wide concrete staircase. It has a capacious vestibule, supper room, cloak rooms etc. and is lighted throughout with electric light. The body of the hall has seating accommodation for five hundred persons and the gallery 220. A strong room has been built in to accommodate the books and records of the council office."*  
[Auckland Star, 30 October 1924, from Picture Theatres of Auckland]

£5000 was borrowed by the Borough Council to build the Town Hall initially. After a costing blow-out, Sinclair O'Connor was asked to redesign the Town Hall to specifications within the £5000 budget (Avondale residents refused to authorise additional loans for the

project.) In April 1924, the Borough Council managed to secure a further £500 loan for the project, to cover building of the galley inside.

**The movies:** Harry Empson showed motion pictures there until August 1927, when he on-sold his business to a Mr Frederick William Meikle of Opotiki.

*In a letter to the council dated 25th October 1927 a Mr A. Nunns, Council property inspector, wrote: "Mr Empson frequently complained that he was making a bare profit out of the picture show. Mr Meikle has not made more than \$30 profit during the seven weeks he has been running the entertainment. It is of course generally recognised that the past year or two have been difficult times for working people. There has been a great deal of unemployment and money has been scarce. This is the chief cause of the poor profits. Then again the increased traffic facilities to the city has been the means of taking away a great deal of his patronage, many people preferring to take a run into town to see a show."* [Jan Grefstad, *Picture Theatres of Auckland*]

On 14 November 1924, the Pooley Garage burned down (2059 Great North Rd). Destroyed totally was a large motor-bus garage, 2 passenger buses, 2 heavy motor lorries (one a Republic lorry owned by CT Pooley himself), 2 motor cars (one, a 6-cylinder Cleveland, valued at £550 but only insured for £200, owned by Constable Douglas), 2 motor-bus tops (1 owned by Mr M McCarthy, listed in the *NZ Herald* as "taxi proprietor of Avondale") and the neighbouring

house in which lived Lawrence Tierney and his family. He, his wife and 10 children were able to escape unharmed, but weren't able to save any possessions.

The front of the garage was occupied by the General Omnibus Company, a firm only in existence 3 months, owned by Messrs E R Alexander and G R Horrocks.

The main telephone and telegraph wires north of Avondale to Helensville ran in front of the garage, and these were seriously affected by the flames. The services northward from Avondale were thus temporarily cut off. [*NZ Herald*, from M Butler report, Heritage planning, Auckland City, 2001]

A letter from Mr B Ball in 1926 drew Council's attention to the "unsightly appearance of the debris lying on the site of the livery stables which were burnt down. " Notice served on Pooley to remove small shed and clean up all rubbish lying on the section. [minutes, 20/1/26]

## 1925

**C T Pooley** owned stables behind the Avondale Hotel/Post Office in Wingate St, and was the main carrier to both the Avondale Roads Board and the Borough Council. In February 1925 he offered "66ft frontage to Great North Road free for improvements on condition that any further land be purchased for £5 per foot." It was resolved "that the offer be accepted and that a further 30 ft be purchased with a view to making a **civic square**." [minutes, 18/2/25]

The "civic square" idea didn't happen exactly as hoped. In 1957,



part of the land was cut into by Auckland City to make a parking bay, and by the late 1960s shops had been built on the site.

The Mainstreet Plans of 2001 included as part of their Stage One project a community square at the north end of this property, so in a way the Avondale Borough Council's idea came to pass. The **Avondale Town Centre** opened on July 20, 2002.

**Racecourse:** *"Exception to a statement by the Hon. R F Bollard, Minister of Internal affairs, that it might be advisable for the Avondale Jockey Club to hold its meetings on Ellerslie Racecourse, thus doing away with the local racecourse, was expressed by Mayor Tait at meeting of Borough Council last evening. The council was practically unanimous on the point that it would be a detriment to the district if the racecourse were closed, as the local residents had always had the free use of the grounds for recreation and sports."*

The proposal had been to cancel the tote licence for the Jockey Club. Bollard later denied this intention or proposal in March that year. [NZ Herald, 19/2/25]

Earlier, in 1921, the Avondale Primary school Committee, *"in view of the great benefit parents and children of the district received from the use of the racecourse grounds respectfully urged the Minister of Education to use his influence in the direction of keeping these ground intact for the people of Avondale."* [Ron Oates, Avondale Primary School 1870-1990, 1990.]

**The Concrete Highway : Great North Road.** *"There was a great deal of development during 1925. At a meeting in Auckland on February 28th, it was approved by all the town boards involved, that they would build a concrete road over the often impassable clay road from Oakley Creek at Point Chevalier, all the way to the end of the Henderson Township. Each Town Board's ratepayers bore the cost for their own section of the new highway."* [Henderson's Mill, Anthony Flude, 1977]

*"Work on the construction of the first section of the concrete highway at Oakley Creek to Lincoln Road, Henderson, is to be commenced on Monday, when the paving gangs will start operations in the Avondale district. The point of commencement will be at Blake St Avondale, and the paving will be pushed on as far as the Whau Creek bridge, after which the section from Blake St to Oakley Creek will be undertaken."*

*"The form of construction will be a complete departure from anything yet done in New Zealand. The flanges of the roadway would be arched, the edges being thicker than the centre of the roadway, thus giving more strength at the point where the greatest weight of traffic is supported. The system is based on recent tests carried out in Illinois."*

Work began March 2, 1925. New Lynn section started approx. June 1, Glen Eden September 1, Henderson, December 1. [NZ Herald, 28/2/25]

*"The excavation of the bed for the concrete highway from Avondale to*

Henderson commenced at the beginning of the month, and a start to be made on laying the concrete in about 10 days. A new concrete-mixer is to be employed on the job. [NZ Herald, 20/3/25]

In November, C J Doncaster drew the Council's attention to "danger of children through riding scooters on the concrete road." [minutes, 5/11/25]

Mr Eric Waterfield said that the earliest casualty on the new concrete road was one Barney Clews, son of Bernard Clews (resident on Great North Rd, secretary of local NZ Labour Party). Young Barney apparently, like most kids those days, took advantage of the new smooth surface to play on with his trolley. He was struck by a motor car and killed. [Recollection of Eric Waterfield to L Truttman, April 2001] While there is no record of the death of a Barney Clews from 1925 to 1945, there must have been some near misses on the new surface, as special mention was made in the December minutes of the Borough Council.

Mr Ernie Croft recalls that when Cracroft Street was fully formed and sealed, from being just a dirt track choked by grass and weeds, children from a family named Wilson would often take the opportunity to ride their trolleys from the top of Cracroft Street (the railway line had no built-up pedestrian crossing in those days – not until around 1959 – so Cracroft St looked much like Chalmers Street today), and glide all the way down the steep incline to Great North Road. One day, Mr Croft said, they hit a telegraph pole situated right across Great North Road at the bottom of the hill.

[Conversation with Mr E Croft, 19 July 2001]

**School Dental Clinic:** The Avondale Primary School Board thanked the Borough Council on 16/5/23 for allowing them to use the Blake St hall as a dental clinic. According to the 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee booklet for Blockhouse Bay Primary School (1995), a Nurse Benn was the first dental nurse appointed in the Auckland Province, for Avondale and Avondale South, in 1924.

**Electric streetlights:** First electric street lamps installed July [Avondale Borough Council minutes, 17/6/25]

**Telephone exchange: 9 February 1925** – manual telephone exchange opened in Avondale with just 28 subscribers. By 1929, this has increased to 160. [From speech by H.G.R Mason, MP, at opening of Avondale Post Office, 1938]

**Third bank:** The BNZ re-opened an agency for the third time on 20 July 1925 at 1996 Great North Road (Allely Building). This time, the bank lasted until 27 January 1942. In 1956, the Bank of New South Wales would use these premises.

*Limited banking facilities were offered to the public of Avondale and district by the BNZ in a small agency near the police station before World War II. [Western Leader, 16/6/65]*

**Motor buses:** "By 1925 a number of motor bus companies were operating from Avondale. They included the General Omnibus Company, The Mount Eden Bus Company, the Progressive Bus

*Company, and Thomas' Buses."*  
[*Challenge of the Whau*, p. 71]

**Board finances:** On October 11, a public meeting was called by the Avondale Progressive Association, bringing into question the Board finances and roading policy. Calls came for Council and Mayor to resign, but rebuffed. Tiarks and Pendlebury led the attack, concerning the state of Avondale South (Blockhouse Bay) roads. [NZ Herald, October 1925]

**Arthur F Maxwell** had taken over Robert Allely's business at 2000 Great North Road by around 1925. According to the memories of several I have interviewed for this project, he was the earliest chemist remembered, "a dapper man with a little moustache," the archetypal chemist in many respects.

He was not the only chemist in Avondale in this period, however. With the building of the Excelsior Chambers to the north of the Primary School, came a **Harwood Clifford Hemus** (until the Depression), and a little later **Mr E A Parr** and his successor **William G Watson** in the Fearon Building (from the mid 1930s.) There would never be a monopoly again, as there had been for Allely.

Also in the mid 1920s, **Ernest "Sam" C Breeze** started a drapers shop in the Station Store at the corner of Robertson Road. By 1928 he'd moved to the Fearon Building, as well, according to Mr Eric Waterfield, also running other businesses in the Waikato and Kaikohe. He apparently fell victim to the Depression of the early 1930s – Mr Waterfield recalls that Mr Breeze's last home was a tent

he'd raised on an empty section in French Bay.

**Shop licence fees:** In December 1925, R&W Hellaby and Fearon Bros. both complained to the Borough Council regarding the high licence fees for butchers shops which were £5 in Avondale compared to 5/- in the City. The Council reduced the fees down to 10/-.

Other licence fees for shops in Avondale (1927):

Bakers licence

10/-

Tea rooms licence

- where accommodation not exceeding 20

10/-

- exceeding 20 but not 40

£1

- exceeding 40 £1

,10/-

Fish shops

10/-

All others, including hawkers

for 1 year or portion of year  
£1

**Billiard saloons:** Later in December 1925, the Borough Council sent a letter to the local billiard saloons, asking them to close on Christmas Day.

In the mid-1920s, **Mr Val Hickman** came to live on Great North Road, at No. 2132, beside what would become the Catholic Church and school. He disappears from the postal directories sometime in the early 1960s. Local residents recall how he would sell locals milk and cream straight from the cow. [Conversation with Mrs Margaret Basset, 26/5/2001]

Around 1925, the "blind avenue" that led straight down from Great

North Road to the racecourse, once called Leslie Avenue for a few years, became **Racecourse Parade**. In 1926/27, the **Avondale Timber Company** set up business on what is now the land occupied by Housing New Zealand units and Suburbs Rugby Club rooms. The business was managed by one Mr Wyniford V Kelsall (who lived down Racecourse Parade near the timber mill), and owned by the Gardner timber milling family which had been in business since the late nineteenth century, milling in the King Country started by George Gardner (1838 – 1898).

Two women ran the business in Masterton and Avondale, “Aunt” Fanny and “Aunt” Alice Gardner, under the company name George Gardner & Sons. [Conversation with Mr Ernie Croft, 19 July 2001. Mr Croft has descent from the Gardner family]

The business didn’t last very long. Avondale Timber Company subdivided the land in early 1927, and was gone by 1929. The Suburbs Rugby Club buildings are likely on the old Timber Company’s land.

From around 1925, **T. (Tommy) Collins** started a fruiterer’s business in the Bluck Building in Brown St. By 1928, he was also a butcher there, and by 1929 had a grocer’s shop there too, each one adjoining the others. He continued this versatile business threesome until World War II, when he downsized to just being a grocer, and disappears from the directories by 1947.

How did this man manage to keep up the pace of simultaneously running three shops at once? The

walls between the three shops had a hole in the brick interior each, big enough for him to hop through from shop to shop as the customers required. [Conversation with Mr Murray Fearon, 16 July 2001]

## 1926

*“The construction of 2 large blocks of shops will be started next month at the corner of Great North Road and Rosebank Road”* [NZ Herald, 19/1/26]  
This would have been the **Excelsior Chambers**.

In **April**, the Borough Council approved Hosking’s subdivision of his land at the corner of Great North Road and Rosebank Road. This opened the way for the building of the Excelsior Chambers along Great North Road. [minutes, 7/4/26]

**Motor Buses:** *“Meanwhile in Auckland City during 1924 there exploded upon an unsuspecting public and an unprepared Tramways Board the motor bus, releasing a period of chaotic city transport. Private motor bus operators engaged in unbridled rivalry with each other and Tramways, turning Queen Street into a circus and giving the public unbelievable services with price wars for two years until the City Council brought in a programme of licensing that once again brought order to the streets.*

*The year was 1926 and with the spice gone out of the business many of the bus operators were happy to sell out to the City Council. Others went further afield to search for passengers and their*

*exodus from the central city trade coincided with the completion of “the concrete road” to Henderson.*

*The Railways Annual Report issued in 1926 showed that Henderson sold an all time high at 151 thousand passenger journeys, but within a year, with the motor bus firmly established, this figure tumbled to 89,761 and a complete new era in railroading was begun”. [Tracks and Trains Through Henderson, by David Lowe, pp 30-31]*

Ray H Hieatt (brother of Charles Hieatt, grocer store) notified the Borough Council of his intention of starting a motorbus service on 25/1/1926.

At the same time, Auckland City Traffic Department drew the Borough’s attention to the “irregularity of the Avondale buses” and asked the Borough Council to see that the buses left the City at scheduled times.

**Kerbside “bowsers”:** Also in 1926 saw the appearance of kerbside fuel pumps at service garages. C A Trigg applied for a permit “to erect a Kerbside Benzine Pump” at his garage on Great North Road (granted) [minutes, 3/2/26]

Later that month, British Imperial Oil Co (in 1927 to become the Shell Company of New Zealand Ltd) asked for the Borough regulations in relation to kerbside pumps. The Chief Inspector of Explosives of the Department of Labour wrote saying his department were in favour of tank installation for petrol storage.

Suddenly, all over the city the matter of petrol pump regulations became an issue, Newmarket

Borough calling for “uniformity “. By August George Stuart had a pump at his garage also (Great North Road. H M Waygood applied for his kerbside pump in July (granted).

1926 saw the appearance of the GOS Station at the five-roads intersection (present day roundabout). This was to become the Bowzer Benzine Station by 1928 (Bowzer was the tradename of the American-designed pump, and the slang of the time: “kerbside bowsers”), and by 1929 the Central Service Station, run by Albert Graven. [Wise’s Directories]

According to Mr Ernie Croft, Albert Graven’s original name was Albert Grubnitz (perhaps changed due to WWI anti-German feeling?) Ernest Croft senior helped build the service station, which was situated on land formerly owned by Charlie Pooley, but seemed to have been sold off after the 1925 fire.

Avondale lore has it that Graven won the Irish Sweepstake, which helped set him up in business. In those days, the Sweepstake was worth around £20,000 to £30,000. [Recollections of Mr Eric Waterfield to author, April 2001]

By the mid 1960s, Graven had left the business, and it had become a Mobil service station. In 1989 it was replaced by the completion of the new bigger Mobil service station across the road (by St Ninians). The site is now a coffee restaurant, after having been a collectibles shop.

**Sub-division by-laws fail:** By 1926, the Borough Council was finding that some of their by-laws were unenforceable. Mr McLiver

took the Borough to court and overturned the 1 rood restriction on subdivisions, and the Council changed the by-law to restrict to at least 1/6 of an acre instead of 1/4. Their lawyers also advised that the 15mph speed limit in the Shopping Centre was unenforceable as well, and the Traffic Inspector was advised to “prosecute with discretion”.

**The postal service** in May 1926 was found to be “inadequate” by the council, as box clearance was not completed in time for dispatch to the city. The council urged a clearance by 6.30 a.m. in time for the 7 a.m. train. The next month the postmaster replied, saying that clearances were by 8.30 pm, in time for dispatch on the evening trains.

One of the Borough Councillors from this period was Paul Richardson (1882-1961), whose father came to New Zealand during the Coromandel gold rush of the nineteenth century.

Soon after marrying Margaret, the couple moved to Herne Bay. Margaret then noticed an advertisement for land on sale in New Windsor (then being divided into 10 acre sections). Going out from Herne Bay to see the land in pony and trap, Margaret came back to tell her husband the property, called Pine Park, “was as close to heaven as you would ever get.”

Paul Richardson worked for the tramways, and would ride a horse from Pine Park to Mt Albert regularly.

The family lived there for a time, before moving to 6 Roberton Road. Nobody walked past Paul Richardson without saying hello. In

1955, he was on the ASB Board of Trustees.

The Richardson’s son, Ken, became the longest-serving District Court judge in New Zealand, a member of the Masonic Lodge, and a University Blue in boxing (trained by Mrs Lorna Gagen nee Richardson’s future husband, Cyril Gagen). [Conversation with Mr and Mrs Gagen, and Mrs Shirley Fleming, 15 June 2001].

**Board finances:** In mid-1926, the Borough Council was seeking to reduce their staff in an effort to save money. They laid off two, including the Borough Engineer, Mr Henshall. However, there was soon an outcry from the public, worried that Council works would no longer be carried out. The Council held a meeting on 15 July to discuss the situation with Henshall. When Henshall didn’t arrive at the meeting, a couple of Councillors went looking for him, and found him “in a state of intoxication” in the Council’s yard on Blake St. He was sacked again, and finished work on 31 July. [minutes]

**The Avondale Beautifying Society**, which since Roads Board days had tried to campaign for flower beds dotted around Avondale streets, and to have new dedicated street corners planted with gardens, were compelled to disband in June 1926 “owing to lack of support.” The Borough Council moved to have a “returned soldier to plant flowering shrubs on the beds kept lately by the Beautifying Society” (at top of Brown St by the railway station). [minutes, 21/6/26]

**The Concrete Highway:** Right up until the dissolution of the Borough Council in 1927, no responsibility

was accepted by the Borough council for repairs and maintenance of the new concrete Great North Road, claiming it had not been “taken over” from the Main Highways Board. In 1926, the New North Road-Station Road-Brown St route was also concreted.

In 1926, **rubbish collection** was inaugurated for the central Avondale area.

**Noise:** A. Syers and others complained of “disturbance at night to the neighbouring residents by Progressive Bus Co’s Garage by the running of the Motor Engines and hammering in the late hours of the night and early hours of the morning. W J Daly and other residents complained of the Grand Omnibus Co’s garage noise between 10 pm and 6 am.

In **October** the **Lynndale Garage** on Great North Road had a closing order served on them for sanitary reasons. This site was later that of Crawford’s Garage in the 1930s.

On **Armistice Day**, the Borough called for “2 minutes silence and the suspension of all vehicular traffic”.

**Whale’s Dairy** was built c.1926, next to the Town Hall. Mrs Rose Whale is listed in the directories from 1926 as either a confectioner or a fruiterer, until Whales Dairy is listed in 1930-32.

The Whale family also had a bread run, in competition with the Avondale Bakery at the other end of Avondale. Mr Bob Browne recalled helping on Saturday mornings and during the school holidays, meeting up with Mr Whale

in Waterview, and then covering Roberton, Rosebank, and even up to New Windsor in the 1930s and 1940s.

Mr Whale would provide for the movie-goers in the Picture Theatre next door by making up trays of ice creams and refreshments and taking them into the cinema.

The Whale’s only daughter, Margaret, married Eldred Stebbing, who ran a recording business in Methuen Road and made 45rpm records from home.

By 1956, the dairy had been sold to P H Martin, and then to Ray Rummins by 1958.

My mother had her first job on arriving in New Zealand in June 1958 working at the Grosvenor Dairy as the dairy was known until recently (now called Eftpos). She told me often of the Saturday night movie goers streaming out of the cinema in a rush during the interval, crushing into the small dairy, buying their refreshments, then hurrying back to the cinema and their seats in time for Part Two of the presentation there.

When Jan Grefstad took over the cinema in 1966, so he told me via e-mail, he had the candy bar specially built so his customers no longer had to leave the cinema to get their ices.

A further note on dairies in Avondale: my mother said that there was a by-law concerning the sale of milk, stipulating that a dairy had to have enough milk on hand to sell up to 4pm each day. When my mother ran her own business for a time in Taylors Street in the

late 1950s-early 1960s, she was once reported on as having run out of milk to sell before the deadline by an irate customer.

## 1927

### **Amalgamation with Auckland City**

*"It is the dirtiest suburb of all Auckland's suburbs, the most bankrupt due to muddle on the part of past administrations. The engineer has admitted that he has never been allowed to complete any work. For five years I have fought their battles to get efficient administration. Some of the residents have my deepest respect; others I would not touch with a forty-foot pole."* [H Tiarks, last Avondale Borough meeting, 18/8/27, as reported by Auckland Star]

**Royal Visit:** The Borough's Works Committee considered in February 1927 the purchase of a banner "for erection in Queen St on the occasion of the visit by HRH The Duke and Duchess of York." The cost for a 20ft X 6ft banner, with words "Avondale Borough extends greetings": £3, 15 /-.

From March the **Auckland Electric Power Board** used the Public Hall ante-room on Saturday mornings as a receiving office, for 5/- hire per week.

In March also, **John Tait** stated to the Council that *"he had no intention of offering himself as a candidate for the Mayoralty at the forthcoming election, and wished to make a personal statement. In the first place he reminded the councillors present that when it had been decided to grant an honorarium to the Mayor he had*

*stated at the time that he would refund the money to the Borough in some shape or form. His first idea had been to erect a shelter shed on the Great North Road near the Post Office, but had now decided to present to the Borough a Children's playground. With this object in view Mr Tait had purchased a piece of land at the corner of Rosebank Road and High Street which he intended to equip and hand over the titles to the council."* This was later to be known as **Tait Park**. The section cost £200, equipment (bought by Tait, Council paying ½ cost – swings, slide, sandpit) £200. [Minutes, 1927]

For a number of years, this was used as a playground, until 1977-1978 when the section was sliced in half for the construction of the Ash Street extension.

By April, the **Excelsior Building** was in existence, as a Mr W Wilde and four other ratepayers complained to the Council regarding the footpath opposite their shops there [minutes, 6/4/27].

In May, H. Tiarks erected a stall to sell produce outside the Spot Cash store (Amos') to raise funds for the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Women and Children.

In June, a Mr A Cummings drew the Council's attention to the "dangerous corner at intersection of Rosebank Road and Great North Road," and suggested the erection of a "Cross Road" notice. Council voted only to receive the letter. [15/6/27]

**Burglary at Avondale –  
Tobacconist shop entered –  
Goods worth £50 stolen.**



*There is no sign of abatement in the epidemic of burglaries in Auckland and suburbs. During Tuesday night, the shop of Mr P Wood, tobacconist, of Avondale, was broken into, and goods to the value of about £50 stole.*

*The shop is one of a recently-opened block of lock-up shops at the corner of Great North Road and Brown St. Mr Wood left the shop locked at 8 o'clock on Tuesday evening and on arriving at 8 o'clock yesterday morning found the door had been forced by a jemmy.*

*The burglars made a good haul, taking away a large amount of cigarettes and tobacco, razors and toilet articles. Only the shop received attention, the hairdressing salon in the rear not being disturbed.* [NZ Herald, 9/6/1927, from M Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City, 2001]

In July, the "News" newspaper published scurrilous comment against the new mayor H. Tiarks. Edward E Copsey, head of the Concerned Citizens Committee, had already studied the "Greater Auckland" movement (of amalgamation of all parts of the Auckland isthmus), and now organised a petition of 1150 electors calling for a poll on amalgamation with Auckland City.

The poll was duly held on 13 August, and a majority of 715 voted in favour of amalgamation.

On 17 August at a Borough Council regular meeting, Tiarks stated he took the poll as "a vote of no confidence" in himself, and resigned, along with 3 councillors.

The remaining 4 had no quorum, and could no longer legally transact business. Copsey was co-opted on, and nominated as Mayor on 23 August. The last meeting of the Borough Council was 31 August 1927. On 1 September, Avondale was officially gazetted as having amalgamated with Auckland City, and increased the then area of the City by 40%.

**Stuart's garage** was in Great North Road between Racecourse Parade and Rosebank Road. [Challenge of the Whau, p.74]

**18 August 1927** – "Fire, which broke out at about 11.30 last evening, destroyed Stuart's service garage, Great North Road, Avondale, together with eight of the nine cars which were stored in it. Residents in the locality were awakened by the sound of an explosion, probably caused by the bursting of a tin of benzine.

*"The building was of galvanised iron with wooden frame-work and when the local volunteer brigade under Superintendent Watson arrived, it was enveloped in flames.*

*Stuart's garage is the largest in the district, and is situated a few yards past the Avondale Post Office. It is understood it was closed up for the night early in the evening, and the cause of the outbreak is a mystery."* [NZ Herald, 19/8/27]

**Station Store:** By 1927, the owner of the two-storeyed shop at #25 Rosebank Road beside Robertson Road, Mr R W Kirkpatrick (son of R S Kirkpatrick who ran Rosebank Bakery from 1903-1905), was complaining of a lack of business with trade having gone [from

railway station area] to the main Great North Road. Blame was laid on increasing use of private motor cars as averse to railway travel. In a letter dated 22 November 1927 to the City Council's Town Clerk, his solicitor wrote:

*"The property at present ... consists of a large shop and living accommodation, together with various sheds, out buildings of quite recent erection, on a large section.*

*"The place has been empty about 12 months and the probability is, it will continue to remain so, all the trade apparently having gone to the main road.*

*The owner proposes ... to divide the land into two equal parts, to have the present 2-storey building back from both frontages and make sundry alterations in the way of turning the shop into living rooms and cutting off the single storey alterations. On the inside section he proposes to erect a dwelling house of 5 rooms."*

[Mike Butler report, Heritage Planning, Auckland City Council, 2001]

These alterations were not done, and the site remains a shop to this day.

According to Mr Ernie Croft, 1927 was the year **Rosebank Road** was surfaced with hot tarseal mix, and was part of a pioneer use of that type of bitumen mix on Auckland roads. Young Ernie had a trolley to which he had fitted a sail made out of a couple of pieces of sacking, and would go gliding down the new surface having a wonderful time. Until one day, he met up with Alby Mason and his bread cart coming along Avondale Road. Ernie was coming down the road, Mason

coming up, and Mason's horse shied and bolted at sight of Ernie's trolley.

[Conversation with Mr E. Croft, 19 July 2001]

## 1928

The **Salvation Army Hall** was opened on 27 February 1928. This was just a few weeks after the first officers were appointed to Avondale (12/1/1928). The property ledger of the time records that the section in Great North Road was bought as early as 15 September 1915. The erection of the building in late 1927 was delayed "owing to the difficulty of securing building contract by reason of this suburb having recently been taken over by the City Council, and existing by laws being at some variance" [Salvation Army Property Board minutes].

*"The block of land was purchased in 1915 with the idea that Avondale would be a likely place for a corps opening within the next 10 years. The land is excellently situated – right in the centre of what is considered to be a fine suburb."*

The Corps decided in 1924 to start preparations to build the hall – the architects were Gray, Young & Norton, built by the Property Department of the Salvation Army. [Property Records, Salvation Army Archives].

The completed building cost £1,483 , 5d. On 3 April 1966, a new frontage on the hall was opened. The hall was sold and officially closed on 11 December 1976, when the corps was transferred to Hugh Brown Drive, New Lynn. [Above from e-mail to author, written by Major Alan Robb, Territorial Archivist, The Salvation Army, Wellington, 2/4/2001]

## 1929

**Avondale Picture Theatre:** Mr Meikle, manager of the movie sessions held at the Town Hall, regularly reported to the Auckland City Council. By now, the Delta Theatre in New Lynn and the Ambassador Theatre in Point Chevalier were up and running, and taking cinema goers from Avondale. And then, there was the advent of the 'talkies ...'

*"Herewith I submit a schedule of my gross receipts for the year ending 30th September 1929. The current week is approximated only.*

*The phenomenal figures for the first two quarters of the year are wholly due to the fact that the Delta Theatre at New Lynn, one mile distant, was closed during the whole of that time ...*

*At the end of April the talking pictures were first heard and although they did not cause a sudden drop in my receipts, as they became more popular the drop became more apparent and when, some five weeks later, the New Lynn Theatre reopened, there was practically nothing left over after paying expenses, some weeks' operations resulting in a heavy loss*

*...*

*The opening of the new Ambassadors Theatre at the Point has also drawn a number of my patrons from the Waterview district.*

*[from Picture Theatres of Auckland, by Jan Grefstad,]*

